702 military leader (Asan) appointed by the chief.
[857] Each desam had its gymnasium (kalari) into which all retainer-Nayar boys were inducted at the age of seven. Their training in gymnastics and swordsmanship lasted nine years, after which they received their arms at the hand of the king
701 and were accorded the title of Nayar. After this age every able-bodied Nayar man was perpetually in military training until he reached the age of retirement or until he was obliged to succeed to the headship of his matrilineal property-group
[541] and retire to manage its lands. In peacetime, mock fights were organized between Nayars of adjacent villages or of adjacent nads, and jousting was conducted at the court for the entertain-
126 ment of the royal family. In war, the Nayars
714] fought naked: their arms were the sword, bow, lance and the bow and arrow, though gunpowder was also used, at least by the more important Rajas. Battles between enemy kingdoms appear to have been stylized. Not more than 10,000 men were commonly brought into the field at one time, and severe loss of life was prevented by the employment of Nambudiri emissaries who, if fighting became intense, entered the battle field and arbitrated between its leaders. [32] If however the king or a chief were slain, his subjects must fight to the death until their honour was avenged by the slaughter of a corresponding
721 leader on the enemy side. The aim of such battles appears to have been solely to gain control over the military power of nads of adjacent kingdoms, together with certain payments of tribute by conquered chieftains, and also to gain

721 temporary ritual privileges in the important Nambudiri-managed temples of alien kingdoms. Several times rights in such a temple were obtained by an alien ruler, and held for a period of years at the cost of repeated battles with the king within whose territory the temple stood.

643 701 664 The power of the king to command his Nayar retainers was checked by periodic assemblies of Nayars (koottams). If the king's foreign policy were disfavoured by the Nayars of a particular nad, or if their own chief failed to pay them promptly, the village military leaders, with some of their followers, assembled in a body called a nad koottam and threatened to defect to some alien ruler. This occasionally happened: cases are recorded of the defection of a whole nad from one ruler to another. Similarly within the desam, small assemblies called desa-koottams might force their policy on their local leader or stage a strike until they compelled him to pay them their dues.

692 681 Within the kingdom, justice was administered at several levels. First, each local caste group had its own periodic assembly of adult men to punish offences against caste law [33] and to arbitrate in small civil disputes within the caste. For the larger castes of Iravas and Pulayas the local caste group was the village: married men met periodically to arrange public ceremonies of their caste and punish offenders. These comprised chiefly wrongful interdining, small debts, thefts and assaults within the caste, and intra-caste adultery. Fines for the upkeep of the caste